



SOUTH WESTERN REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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March 8, 2013

Transportation Committee
Room 2300, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

RE: Senate Bill # 849 - *An Act Concerning Local Bridge Program Reform and Establishing a Local Transportation Capital Program*

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Transportation Committee:

The South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA) and The South Western Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (SWRMPO) are pleased to provide testimony on Senate Bill # 849 - *An Act Concerning Local Bridge Program Reform and Establishing a Local Transportation Capital Program*.

Highlighting the flawed process for approving municipal bridge projects, SWRPA/SWRMPO Legislative Policy Committee Co-Chairman First Selectman Gayle Weinstein presented testimony on HB # 5547 – An Act Establishing a Task Force to Streamline the Process for Approving Bridge Projects,. As First Selectman Weinstein stated, “the current approach is costly and time consuming for both the Connecticut Department of Transportation and the municipality. In fact, it may take up to 5 years to obtain approval and complete construction of a project, which is unacceptable when there may be safety concerns for deficient bridges. An additional problem is that our smallest bridges don’t qualify for funding, costing municipalities more money than large span bridges.”

An announcement by Governor Malloy indicated that legislation would be introduced to “facilitate and streamline the design and construction of municipal road and bridge projects by reducing red tape and allowing municipal governments to focus their federal transportation funding on capital projects rather than administrative costs”. The proposed legislation does not specify how this goal will be accomplished.

We ask that Senate Bill # 849 be amended to accomplish the goals set forth in the Governor’s press release to municipalities as follows:

1. **Legislation must provide a stable State funding stream for local bridge projects.** We applaud the Governor’s desire to increase project funding grant percentages, but our member municipalities must be assured that funding will be guaranteed and not be subject to the bonding process.
2. **Legislation must clearly define how the process for project approval will be streamlined.** Other than removing the requirement for a local public hearing, this Bill does not define what steps in the local bridge design process will be eliminated.

Therefore, we strongly urge that Senate Bill #849 be amended to address the critical concerns regarding funding and streamlining of the local bridge project process.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gayle M. Weinstein
Robert M. Byrnes
Co-Chairs, Joint South Western Regional Planning Agency/South Western Regional Metropolitan Planning Organization Legislative Policy Committee